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ELEVATOR

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BOSTON
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1885

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THE ELEVATOR.

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I.

THROUGH the curtained doorway of Mrs. Edward Roberts's pretty drawing-room, in Hotel Bellingham, shows the snowy and gleaming array of a table set for dinner, under the dim light of gas-burners turned low. An air of expectancy pervades the place, and the uneasiness of Mr. Roberts, in evening dress, expresses something more as he turns from a glance into the dining-

room, and still holding the *portière* with one hand, takes out his watch with the other.

Mr. Roberts, to Mrs. Roberts entering the drawing-room from regions beyond: "My dear, it's six o'clock. What can have become of your aunt?"

Mrs. Roberts, with a little anxiety: "That was just what I was going to ask. She's never late; and the children are quite heart-broken. They had counted upon seeing her, and talking Christmas a little before they were put to bed."

Roberts: "Very singular her not coming! Is she going to begin standing upon ceremony with us, and not come till the hour?"

Mrs. Roberts: "Nonsense, Edward! She's been detained. Of course she'll

be here in a moment. How impatient you are!"

Roberts: "You must profit by me as an awful example."

Mrs. Roberts, going about the room, and bestowing little touches here and there on its ornaments: "If you'd had that new cook to battle with over this dinner, you'd have learned patience by this time without any awful example."

Roberts, dropping nervously into the nearest chair: "I hope she isn't behind time."

Mrs. Roberts, drifting upon the sofa, and disposing her train effectively on the carpet around her: "She's before time. The dinner is in the last moment of ripe perfection now, when we must still give people fifteen minutes' grace." She stud-

ies the convolutions of her train absent-mindedly.

Roberts, joining in its perusal: "Is that the way you 've arranged to be sitting when people come in?"

Mrs. Roberts: "Of course not. I shall get up to receive them."

Roberts: "That 's rather a pity. To destroy such a lovely pose."

Mrs. Roberts: "Do you like it?"

Roberts: "It 's divine."

Mrs. Roberts: "You might throw me a kiss."

Roberts: "No; if it happened to strike on that train anywhere, it might spoil one of the folds. I can't risk it." A ring is heard at the apartment door. They spring to their feet simultaneously.

Mrs. Roberts: "There 's Aunt Mary

now!" She calls into the vestibule, "Aunt Mary!"

Dr. Lawton, putting aside the vestibule *portière*, with affected timidity: "Very sorry. Merely a father."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, Dr. Lawton? I am so glad to see you!" She gives him her hand: "I thought it was my aunt. We can't understand why she has n't come. Why! where 's Miss Lawton?"

Lawton: "That is precisely what I was going to ask you."

Mrs. Roberts: "Why, she is n't here."

Lawton: "So it seems. I left her with the carriage at the door when I started to walk here. She called after me down the stairs that she would be ready in three seconds, and begged me to hurry, so that we could come in to-

gether, and not let people know I'd saved half a dollar by walking."

Mrs. Roberts: "*She's* been detained too!"

Roberts, coming forward: "Now you know what it is to have a delinquent Aunt-Mary-in-law."

Lawton, shaking hands with him: "Oh, Roberts! Is that you? It's astonishing how little one makes of the husband of a lady who gives a dinner. In my time — a long time ago — he used to carve. But nowadays, when everything is served *à la Russe*, he might as well be abolished. Don't you think, on the whole, Roberts, you'd better not have come?"

Roberts: "Well, you see, I had no excuse. I hated to say an engagement when I had n't any."

Lawton: "Oh, I understand. You *wanted* to come. We all do, when Mrs. Roberts will let us." He goes and sits down by Mrs. Roberts, who has taken a more provisional pose on the sofa. "Mrs. Roberts, you're the only woman in Boston who could hope to get people, with a fireside of their own — or a register — out to a Christmas dinner. You know I still wonder at your effrontery a little?"

Mrs. Roberts, laughing: "I knew I should catch you if I baited my hook with your old friend."

Lawton: "Yes, nothing would have kept me away when I heard Bemis was coming. But he does n't seem so inflexible in regard to me. Where is he?"

Mrs. Roberts: "I'm sure I don't know. I'd no idea I was giving such a

formal dinner. But everybody, beginning with my own aunt, seems to think it a ceremonious occasion. There are only to be twelve. Do you know the Millers?"

Lawton: "No, thank goodness! One meets some people so often that one fancies one's weariness of them reflected in their sympathetic countenances. Who are these acceptably novel Millers?"

Mrs. Roberts: "Do explain the Millers to the doctor, Edward."

Roberts, standing on the hearth-rug, with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets: "They board."

Lawton: "Genus. That accounts for their willingness to flutter round your evening lamp when they ought to be singeing their wings at their own. Well, species?"

Roberts: "They 're very nice young newly married people. He 's something or other of some kind of manufactures. And Mrs. Miller is disposed to think that all other ladies are as fond of him as she is."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh! That is not so, Edward."

Lawton: "You defend your sex, as women always do. But you 'll admit that, as your friend, Mrs. Miller may have this foible."

Mrs. Roberts: "I admit nothing of the kind. And we 've invited another young couple who have n't gone to housekeeping yet — the Curwens. And *he* has the same foible as Mrs. Miller." Mrs. Roberts takes out her handkerchief and laughs into it.

Lawton: "That is, if Mrs. Miller has it, which we both deny. Let us hope that Mrs. Miller and Mr. Curwen may not get to making eyes at each other."

Roberts: "And Mr. Bemis and his son complete the list. Why, Agnes, there are only ten. You said there were twelve."

Mrs. Roberts: "Well, never mind. I meant ten. I forgot that the Summerses declined." A ring is heard. "Ah! *that's* Aunt Mary." She runs into the vestibule, and is heard exclaiming without: "Why, Mrs. Miller, is it you? I thought it was my aunt. Where is Mr. Miller?"

Mrs. Miller, entering the drawing-room arm-in-arm with her hostess: "Oh, he'll be here directly. I had to let him run back for my fan."

Mrs. Roberts: "Well, we 're very glad to have you to begin with. Let me introduce Dr. Lawton."

Mrs. Miller, in a polite murmur: "Dr. Lawton." In a louder tone: "Oh, Mr. Roberts!"

Lawton: "You see, Roberts? The same aggrieved surprise at meeting you here that I felt."

Mrs. Miller: "What in the world do you mean?"

Lawton: "Don't you think that when a husband is present at his wife's dinner party he repeats the mortifying superfluity of a bridegroom at a wedding?"

Mrs. Miller: "I 'm *sure* I don't know what you mean. I should never think of giving a dinner without Mr. Miller."

Lawton: "No?" A ring is heard. "There 's Bemis."

Mrs. Miller: "It's Mr. Miller."

Mrs. Roberts: "Aunt Mary at last!" As she bustles toward the door: "Edward, there *are* twelve — Aunt Mary and Willis."

Roberts: "Oh yes. I totally forgot Willis."

Lawton: "Who's Willis?"

Roberts: "Willis? Oh, Willis is my wife's brother. We always have him."

Dr. Lawton: "Oh, yes, Campbell."

Mrs. Roberts, without: "Mr. Bemis! So kind of you to come on Christmas."

Mr. Bemis, without: "So kind of you to ask us houseless strangers."

Mrs. Roberts, without: "I ran out here, thinking it was my aunt. She's played us a trick, and has n't come yet."

Bemis, entering the drawing-room with Mrs. Roberts: "I hope she won't

fail altogether. I have n't met her for twenty years, and I counted so much upon the pleasure — Hello, Lawton!"

Lawton: "Hullo, old fellow!" They fly at each other and shake hands. "Glad to see you again."

Bemis, reaching his left hand to Mr. Roberts, while Mr. Lawton keeps his right: "Ah! Mr. Roberts."

Lawton: "Oh, never mind *him*. He 's merely the husband of the hostess."

Mrs. Miller, to Roberts: "What *does* he mean?"

Roberts: "Oh, nothing. Merely a joke he 's experimenting with."

Lawton, to Bemis: "Where 's your boy?"

Bemis: "He 'll be here directly. He preferred to walk. Where 's your girl?"

Lawton: "Oh, she'll come by-and-by. She preferred to drive."

Mrs. Roberts, introducing them: "Mr. Bemis, have you met Mrs. Miller?" She drifts away again, manifestly too uneasy to resume even a provisional pose on the sofa, and walks detachedly about the room.

Bemis: "What a lovely apartment Mrs. Roberts has."

Mrs. Miller: "Exquisite! But then she has such perfect taste."

Bemis, to Mrs. Roberts, who drifts near them: "We were talking about your apartment, Mrs. Roberts. It's charming."

Mrs. Roberts: "It *is* nice. It's the ideal way of living. All on one floor. No stairs. Nothing."

Bemis: "Yes, when once you get here! But that little matter of five pair up —"

Mrs. Roberts: "You don't mean to say you *walked* up? Why in the world did n't you take the elevator?"

Bemis: "I did n't know you had one."

Mrs. Roberts: "It 's the only thing that makes life worth living in a flat. All these apartment hotels have them."

Bemis: "Bless me! Well, you see, I've been away from Boston so long, and am back so short a time, that I can't realize your luxuries and conveniences. In Florence we *always* walk up. They have *ascenseurs* in a few great hotels, and they brag of it in immense signs on the sides of the building."

Lawton: "What pastoral simplicity! We are elevated here to a degree that

you can't conceive of, gentle shepherd. Has yours got an air-cushion, Mrs. Roberts?"

Mrs. Roberts: "An air-cushion? What 's that?"

Lawton: "The only thing that makes your life worth a moment's purchase in an elevator. You get in with a glass of water, a basket of eggs, and a file of the *Daily Advertiser.* They cut the elevator loose at the top, and you drop."

Both ladies: "Oh!"

Lawton: "In three seconds you arrive at the ground-floor, reading your file of the *Daily Advertiser;* not an egg broken nor a drop spilled. I saw it done in a New York hotel. The air is compressed under the elevator, and acts as a sort of ethereal buffer."

Mrs. Roberts: "And why don't we always go down in that way?"

Lawton: "Because sometimes the walls of the elevator shaft give out."

Mrs. Roberts: "And what then?"

Lawton: "Then the elevator stops more abruptly. I had a friend who tried it when this happened."

Mrs. Roberts: "And what did he do?"

Lawton: "Stepped out of the elevator; laughed; cried; went home; got into bed; and did not get up for six weeks. Nervous shock. He was fortunate."

Mrs. Miller: "I should n't think you'd want an air-cushion on *your* elevator, Mrs. Roberts."

Mrs. Roberts: "No, indeed! Hor-

rid!" The bell rings. "Edward, *you* go and see if that's Aunt Mary."

Mrs. Miller: "It's Mr. Miller, I know."

Bemis: "Or my son."

Lawton: "My voice is for Mrs. Roberts's brother. I've given up all hopes of my daughter."

Roberts, without: "Oh, Curwen! Glad to see you! Thought you were my wife's aunt."

Lawton, at a suppressed sigh from Mrs. Roberts: "It's one of his jokes, Mrs. Roberts. Of course it's your aunt."

Mrs. Roberts, through her set teeth, smilingly: "Oh, if it *is*, I'll make him suffer for it."

Mr. Curwen, without: "No, I hated to wait, so I walked up."

Lawton: "It is Mr. Curwen, after all, Mrs. Roberts. Now let me see how a lady transmutes a frown of threatened vengeance into a smile of society welcome."

Mrs. Roberts: "Well, look!" To Mr. Curwen, who enters, followed by her husband: "Ah, Mr. Curwen! So glad to see you. You know all our friends here — Mrs. Miller, Dr. Lawton, and Mr. Bemis?"

Curwen, smiling and bowing and shaking hands right and left: "Very glad — very happy — pleased to know you."

Mrs. Roberts, behind her fan to Dr. Lawton: "Did n't I do it beautifully?"

Lawton, behind his hand: "Wonderfully! And so unconscious of the fact that he has n't his wife with him."

Mrs. Roberts, in great astonishment, to Mr. Curwen: "Where in the world is Mrs. Curwen?"

Curwen: "Oh — oh — she'll be here. I thought she *was* here. She started from home with two right-hand gloves, and I had to go back for a left, and I — I supposed — Good heavens!" pulling the glove out of his pocket. "I ought to have sent it to her in the ladies' dressing-room." He remains with the glove held up before him, in spectacular stupefaction.

Lawton: "Only imagine what Mrs. Curwen would be saying of you if she *were* in the dressing-room."

Roberts: "Mr. Curwen felt so sure she was there that he would n't wait to take the elevator, and walked up." An-

other ring is heard. "Shall I go and meet your aunt *now*, my dear?"

Mrs. Roberts: "No, indeed! She may come in now with all the formality she chooses, and I will receive her excuses in state." She waves her fan softly to and fro, concealing a murmur of trepidation under an indignant air, till the *portière* opens, and Mr. Willis Campbell enters. Then Mrs. Roberts breaks in nervous agitation: "Why, Willis! Where's Aunt Mary?"

Mrs. Miller: "And Mr. Miller?"

Curwen: "And Mrs. Curwen?"

Lawton: "And my daughter?"

Bemis: "And my son?"

Mr. Campbell, looking tranquilly round on the faces of his interrogators: "Is it a conundrum?"

Mrs. Roberts, mingling a real distress with an effort of mock heroic solemnity: "It is a tragedy! Oh, Willis dear! it's what you see — what you hear: a niece without an aunt, a wife without a husband, a father without a son, and another father without a daughter."

Roberts: "And a dinner getting cold, and a cook getting hot."

Lawton: "And you are expected to account for the whole situation."

Campbell: "Oh, I understand! I don't know what your little game is, Agnes, but I can wait and see. *I'm* not hungry."

Mrs. Roberts: "Willis, do you think I would try and play a trick on you, if I could?"

Campbell: "I think you can't. Come,

now, Agnes! It's a failure. Own up, and bring the rest of the company out of the next room. I suppose almost anything is allowable at this festive season, but this is pretty feeble."

Mrs. Roberts: "Indeed, indeed, they are not there!"

Campbell: "Where are they, then?"

All: "That's what we don't know."

Campbell: "Oh, come, now! that's a little too thin. You don't know where *any* of all these blood-relations and connections by marriage are? Well, search me!"

Mrs. Roberts, in open distress: "Oh, I'm sure something must have happened to Aunt Mary!"

Mrs. Miller: "I can't understand what Ellery C. Miller means."

Lawton, with a simulated sternness: "I hope you haven't let that son of yours run away with my daughter, Bemis?"

Bemis: "I'm afraid he's come to a pass where he wouldn't ask *my* leave."

Curwen, re-assuring himself: "Ah, she's all right, of course. I know that —"

Bemis: "Miss Lawton?"

Curwen: "No, no — Mrs. Curwen."

Campbell: "Is it a true bill, Agnes?"

Mrs. Roberts: "Indeed it is, Willis. We've been expecting her for an hour — of course she always comes early — and I'm afraid she's been taken ill suddenly."

Roberts: "Oh, I don't think it's that, my dear."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, of course you never think anything's wrong, Edward. My whole family might die, and —" Mrs. Roberts restrains herself, and turns to Mr. Campbell, with hysterical cheerfulness: "Who came up in the elevator with you?"

Campbell: "Me? *I* didn't come in the elevator. I had my usual luck. The elevator was up somewhere, and after I'd pressed the annunciator button till my thumb ached, I watched my chance and walked up."

Mrs. Roberts: "Where was the janitor?"

Campbell: "Where the janitor always is — nowhere."

Lawton: "Eating his Christmas dinner, probably."

Mrs. Roberts, partially abandoning and then recovering herself: "Yes, it's perfectly spoiled! Well, friends, I think we'd better go to dinner — that's the only way to bring them. I'll go out and interview the cook." *Sotto voce* to her husband: "If I don't go somewhere and have a cry, I shall break down here before everybody. Did you ever know anything so strange? It's perfectly — pokerish."

Lawton: "Yes, there's nothing like serving dinner to bring the belated guest. It's as infallible as going without an umbrella when it won't rain."

Campbell: "No, no! Wait a minute, Roberts. You might sit down without one guest, but you can't sit down without five. It's the old joke about the

part of Hamlet. I'll just step round to Aunt Mary's house — why, I'll be back in three minutes."

Mrs. Roberts, with perfervid gratitude: "Oh, how *good* you are, Willis! You don't know how *much* you're doing! What presence of mind you have! Why could n't we have thought of sending for her? Oh, Willis, I can never be grateful enough to you! But you always think of everything."

Roberts: "I accept my punishment meekly, Willis, since it 's in your honor."

Lawton: "It 's a simple and beautiful solution, Mrs. Roberts, as far as your aunt 's concerned; but I don't see how it helps the rest of us."

Mrs. Miller, to Mr. Campbell: "If you meet Mr. Miller —"

Curwen: "Or my wife—"

Bemis: "Or my son—"

Lawton: "Or my daughter—"

Campbell: "I'll tell them they've just one chance in a hundred to save their lives, and that one is open to them for just five minutes."

Lawton: "Tell my daughter that I've been here half an hour, and everybody knows I drove here with her."

Bemis: "Tell my son that the next time I'll walk, and let him drive."

Mrs. Miller: "Tell Mr. Miller I found I had my fan, after all."

Curwen: "And Mrs. Curwen that I've got her glove all right." He holds it up.

Mrs. Roberts, at a look of mystification and demand from her brother:

"Never mind explanations, Willis. They 'll understand, and we 'll explain when you get back."

Lawton, examining the glove which Curwen holds up: "Why, so it *is* right!"

Curwen: "What do you mean?"

Lawton: "Were you sent back to get a *left* glove?"

Curwen: "Yes, yes; of course."

Lawton: "Well, if you 'll notice, this is a right one. The one at home is left."

Curwen, staring helplessly at it: "Gracious Powers! what shall I do?"

Lawton: "Pray that Mrs. Curwen may *never* come."

Mr. Curwen, dashing through the door: "I 'll be back by the time Mr. Campbell returns."

Mrs. Miller, with tokens of breaking down visible to Mrs. Roberts: "I wonder what could have kept Mr. Miller. It 's so very mysterious, I—"

Mrs. Roberts, suddenly seizing her by the arm, and hurrying her from the room: "Now, Mrs. Miller, you 've just got time to see my baby."

Mr. Roberts, winking at his remaining guests: "A little cry will do them good. I saw as soon as Willis came in instead of her aunt, that my wife could n't get through without it. They 'll come back as bright as—".

Lawton: "Bemis, should you mind a bereaved father falling upon your neck?"

Bemis: "Yes, Lawton, I think I should."

Lawton: "Well it *is* rather odd about all those people. You can say of one or two that they've been delayed, but five people can't have been delayed. It's too much. It amounts to a coincidence. Hello! What's that?"

Roberts: "What's what?"

Lawton: "I thought I heard a cry."

Roberts: "Very likely you did. They profess to deaden these floors so that you can't hear from one apartment to another. But I know pretty well when my neighbor overhead is trying to wheel his baby to sleep in a perambulator at three o'clock in the morning; and I guess our young lady lets the people below understand when she's wakeful. But it's the only way to live, after all. I would n't go back to the old up-and-

down-stairs, house-in-a-block system on any account. Here we all live on the ground-floor practically. The elevator equalizes everything."

Bemis: "Yes, when it happens to be where you are. I believe I prefer the good old Florentine fashion of walking upstairs, after all."

Lawton: "Roberts, I *did* hear something. Hark! It sounded like a cry for help. There!"

Roberts: "You're nervous, doctor. It's nothing. However, it's easy enough to go out and see." He goes out to the door of the apartment, and immediately returns. He beckons to Dr. Lawton and Mr. Bemis, with a mysterious whisper: "Come here, both of you. Don't alarm the ladies."

II.

In the interior of the elevator are seated Mrs. Roberts's Aunt Mary (Mrs. Crashaw), Mrs. Curwen, and Miss Lawton; Mr. Miller and Mr. Alfred Bemis are standing with their hats in their hands. They are in dinner costume, with their overcoats on their arms, and the ladies' draperies and ribbons show from under their outer wraps, where they are caught up and held with that caution which characterizes ladies in sitting attitudes which they have not been able to choose deliberately. As they talk together, the elevator rises

very slowly, and they continue talking for some time before they observe that it has stopped.

Mrs. Crashaw: "It's very fortunate that we are all here together. I ought to have been here half an hour ago, but I was kept at home by an accident to my finery, and before I could be put in repair I heard it striking the quarter past. I don't know what my niece will say to me. I hope you good people will all stand by me if she should be violent."

Miller: "In what a poor man may with his wife's fan, you shall command me, Mrs. Crashaw." He takes the fan out, and unfurls it.

Mrs. Crashaw: "Did she send you back for it?"

Miller: "I should n't have had the

pleasure of arriving with you if she had n't."

Mrs. Crashaw, laughing, to Mrs. Curwen: "What did you send *yours* back for, my dear?"

Mrs. Curwen, thrusting out one hand gloved, and the other ungloved: "I did n't want two rights."

Young Mr. Bemis: "Not even women's rights?"

Mrs. Curwen: "Oh, so young and so depraved! Are all the young men in Florence so bad?" Surveying her extended arms, which she turns over: "I don't know that I need have sent him for the other glove. I could have explained to Mrs. Roberts. Perhaps she would have forgiven my coming in one glove."

Miller, looking down at the pretty arms: "If she had seen you without."

Mrs. Curwen: "Oh, you were looking!" She rapidly involves her arms in her wrap. Then she suddenly unwraps them, and regards them thoughtfully. "What if he should bring a ten-button instead of an eight! And he 's quite capable of doing it."

Miller: "Are there such things as ten-button gloves?"

Mrs. Curwen: "You would think there were ten-thousand-button gloves if you had them to button."

Miller: "It would depend upon whom I had to button them for."

Mrs. Curwen: "For Mrs. Miller, for example."

Mrs. Crashaw: "We women are too

bad, always sending people back for something. It 's well the men don't know *how* bad."

Mrs. Curwen: "'Sh! Mr. Miller is listening. And he thought we were perfect. He asks nothing better than to be sent back for his wife's fan. And he does n't say anything even under his breath when she finds she 's forgotten it, and begins, 'Oh, dearest, my fan —' Mr. Curwen does. But he goes all the same. I hope you have your father in good training, Miss Lawton. You must commence with your father, if you expect your husband to be 'good.'"

Miss Lawton: "Then mine will never behave, for papa is perfectly incorrigible."

Mrs. Curwen: "I'm sorry to hear

such a bad report of him. Should n't *you* think he would be 'good,' Mr. Bemis?"

Young Mr. Bemis: "I should think he would try."

Mrs. Curwen: "A diplomate, as well as a punster already! I must warn Miss Lawton."

Mrs. Crashaw, interposing to spare the young people: "What an amusing thing elevator etiquette is! Why should the gentlemen take their hats off? Why don't you take your hats off in a horse-car?"

Miller: "The theory is that the elevator is a room."

Young Mr. Bemis: "We were at a hotel in London where they called it the Ascending Room."

Miss Lawton: "Oh, how amusing!"

Miller, looking about: "This is a regular drawing-room for size and luxury. They're usually such cribs in these hotels."

Mrs. Crashaw: "Yes, it's very nice, though I say it that should n't of my niece's elevator. The worst about it is, it 's so slow."

Miller: "Let 's hope it 's sure."

Young Mr. Bemis: "Some of these elevators in America go up like express trains."

Mrs. Curwen, drawing her shawl about her shoulders, as if to be ready to step out: "Well, I never get into one without taking my life in my hand, and my heart in my mouth. I suppose everyone really expects an elevator to drop with

them, some day, just as everybody really expects to see a ghost some time."

Mrs. Crashaw: "Oh, my dear! what an extremely disagreeable subject of conversation."

Mrs. Curwen: "I can't help it, Mrs. Crashaw. When I reflect that there are two thousand elevators in Boston, and that the inspectors have just pronounced a hundred and seventy of them unsafe, I 'm so desperate when I get into one that I could — flirt!"

Miller, guarding himself with the fan: "Not with me!"

Miss Lawton, to young Mr. Bemis: "How it *does* creep!"

Young Mr. Bemis, looking down fondly at her: "Oh, does it?"

Mrs. Crashaw: "Why, it does n't go

at all! It's stopped. Let us get out." They all rise.

The Elevator Boy, pulling at the rope: "We're not there, yet."

Mrs. Crashaw, with mingled trepidation and severity: "Not there? What are you stopping then, for?"

The Elevator Boy: "I don't know. It seems to be caught."

Mrs. Crashaw: "Caught?"

Miss Lawton: "Oh, dear!"

Young Mr. Bemis: "Don't mind."

Miller: "Caught? Nonsense!"

Mrs. Curwen: "*We're* caught, I should say." She sinks back on the seat.

The Elevator Boy: "Seemed to be going kind of funny all day!" He keeps tugging at the rope.

Miller, arresting the boy's efforts: "Well, hold on — stop! What are you doing?"

The Elevator Boy: "Trying to make it go."

Miller: "Well, don't be so — violent about it. You might break something."

The Elevator Boy: "Break a wire rope like that!"

Miller: "Well, well, be quiet, now. Ladies, I think you'd better sit down — and as gently as possible. I would n't move about much."

Mrs. Curwen: "Move! We're stone. And I wish for my part I were a feather."

Miller, to the boy: "Er — a — er — where do you suppose we are?"

The Elevator Boy: "We're in the

shaft, between the fourth and fifth floors." He attempts a fresh demonstration on the rope, but is prevented.

Miller: "Hold on! Er — er — "

Mrs. Crashaw, as if the boy had to be communicated with through an interpreter: "Ask him if it's ever happened before."

Miller: "Yes. Were you ever caught before?"

The Elevator Boy: "No."

Miller: "He says no."

Mrs. Crashaw: "Ask him if the elevator has a safety device."

Miller: "Has it got a safety device?"

The Elevator Boy: "How should I know?"

Miller: "He says he don't know."

Mrs. Curwen, in a shriek of hysterical

laughter: "Why, he understands English!"

Mrs. Crashaw, sternly ignoring the insinuation: "Ask him if there 's any means of calling the janitor."

Miller: "Could you call the janitor?"

The Elevator Boy, ironically: "Well, there ain't any telephone attachment."

Miller, solemnly: "No, he says there is n't."

Mrs. Crashaw, sinking back on the seat with resignation: "Well, I don't know what my niece will say."

Miss Lawton: "Poor papa!"

Young Mr. Bemis, gathering one of her wandering hands into his: "Don't be frightened. I 'm sure there 's no danger."

The Elevator Boy, indignantly:

"Why, she can't *drop*. The cogs in the runs won't let her!"

All: "Oh!"

Miller, with a sigh of relief: "I knew there must be something of the kind. Well, I wish my wife had her fan."

Mrs. Curwen: "And if I had my left glove I should be perfectly happy. Not that I know what the cogs in the runs are!"

Mrs. Crashaw: "Then we 're merely caught here?"

Miller: "That 's all."

Mrs. Curwen: "It 's quite enough for the purpose. Could n't you put on a life-preserver, Mr. Miller, and go ashore and get help from the natives?"

Miss Lawton, putting her handkerchief to her eyes: "Oh, dear!"

Mrs. Crashaw, putting her arm around her: "Don't be frightened, my child. There 's no danger."

Young Mr. Bemis, caressing the hand which he holds: "Don't be frightened."

Miss Lawton: "Don't leave me."

Young Mr. Bemis: "No, no; I won't. Keep fast hold of my hand."

Miss Lawton: "Oh, yes, I will! I 'm ashamed to cry."

Young Mr. Bemis, fervently: "Oh, you need n't be! It is perfectly natural you should."

Mrs. Curwen: "I 'm too badly scared for tears. Mr. Miller, you seem to be in charge of this expedition — could n't you do something? Throw out ballast, or let the boy down in a parachute? Or I 've read of a shipwreck where the sur-

vivors, in an open boat, joined in a cry, and attracted the notice of a vessel that was going to pass them. We might join in a cry."

Miller: "Oh, it 's all very well joking, Mrs. Curwen —"

Mrs. Curwen: "You call it joking!"

Miller: "But it 's not so amusing, being cooped up here indefinitely. I don't know how we 're to get out. We can't join in a cry, and rouse the whole house. It would be ridiculous."

Mrs. Curwen: "And our present attitude is so eminently dignified! Well, I suppose we shall have to cast lots pretty soon to see which of us shall be sacrificed to nourish the survivors. It 's long past dinner-time."

Miss Lawton, breaking down: "Oh, *don't* say such terrible things."

Young Mr. Bemis, indignantly comforting her: "Don't, don't cry. There 's no danger. It 's perfectly safe."

Miller, to the Elevator Boy: "Could n't you climb up the cable, and get on to the landing, and — ah! — get somebody?"

The Elevator Boy: "I could, maybe, if there was a hole in the roof."

Miller, glancing up: "Ah! true."

Mrs. Crashaw, with an old lady's serious kindness: "My boy, can't you think of anything to do for us?"

The Elevator Boy, yielding to the touch of humanity, and bursting into tears: "No, ma'am, I can't. And everybody blamin' me, as if I done it. What 's my poor mother goin' to do?"

Mrs. Crashaw, soothingly: "But you said the runs in the cogs —"

The Elevator Boy: "How can I tell! That's what they say. They hain't never been tried."

Mrs. Curwen, springing to her feet: "There! I knew I should. Oh!" She sinks fainting to the floor.

Mrs. Crashaw, abandoning Miss Lawton to the ministrations of young Mr. Bemis, while she kneels beside Mrs. Curwen and chafes her hand: "Oh, poor thing! I knew she was overwrought by the way she was keeping up. Give her air, Mr. Miller. Open a— Oh, there is n't any window!"

Miller, dropping on his knees and fanning Mrs. Curwen: "There! there! Wake up, Mrs. Curwen. I did n't mean to scold you for joking. I did n't, indeed. I—I—I don't know what the

deuce I'm up to." He gathers Mrs. Curwen's inanimate form in his arms, and fans her face where it lies on his shoulder. "I don't know what my wife would say if —"

Mrs. Crashaw: "She would say that you were doing your duty."

Miller, a little consoled: "Oh, do you think so? Well, perhaps."

Young Mr. Bemis: "Do you feel faint at all, Miss Lawton?"

Miss Lawton: "No, I think not. No, not if you say it's safe."

Young Mr. Bemis: "Oh, I'm sure it is!"

Miss Lawton, renewing her hold upon his hand: "Well, then! Perhaps I hurt you?"

Young Mr. Bemis: "No, no! You could n't."

Miss Lawton: "How kind you are!"

Mrs. Curwen, opening her eyes: "Where —"

Miller, rapidly transferring her to Mrs. Crashaw: "Still in the elevator, Mrs. Curwen." Rising to his feet: "Something must be done. Perhaps we *had* better unite in a cry. It 's ridiculous, of course. But it 's the only thing we can do. Now, then! Hello!"

Miss Lawton: "Papa!"

Mrs. Crashaw: "Agne-e-e-s!"

Mrs. Curwen, faintly: "Walter!"

The Elevator Boy: "Say!"

Miller: "Oh, that won't do. All join in 'Hello!'"

All: "Hello!"

Miller: "Once more!"

All: "Hello!"

Miller: "*Once* more!"

All: "Hello!"

Miller: "Now wait awhile." After an interval: "No, nobody coming." He takes out his watch. "We must repeat this cry at intervals of a half-minute. Now, then!" They all join in the cry, repeating it as Mr. Miller makes the signal with his lifted hand.

Miss Lawton: "Oh, it's no use!"

Mrs. Crashaw: "They don't hear."

Mrs. Curwen: "They *won't* hear."

Miller: "Now, then, three times!"

All: "Hello! hello! hello!"

III.

ROBERTS appears at the outer door of his apartment on the fifth floor. It opens upon a spacious landing, to which a wide staircase ascends at one side. At the other is seen the grated door to the shaft of the elevator. He peers about on all sides, and listens for a moment before he speaks.

Roberts: "Hello yourself."

Miller, invisibly from the shaft: "Is that you, Roberts?"

Roberts: "Yes; where in the world are you?"

Miller: "In the elevator."

Mrs. Crashaw: "We 're *all* here, Edward."

Roberts: "What! You, Aunt Mary!"

Mrs. Crashaw: "Yes. Did n't I say so?"

Roberts: "Why don't you come up?"

Miller: "We can't. The elevator has got stuck somehow."

Roberts: "Got stuck? Bless my soul! How did it happen? How long have you been there?"

Mrs. Curwen: "Since the world began!"

Miller: "What 's the use asking how it happened? We don't know, and we don't care. What we want to do is to get out."

Roberts: "Yes, yes! Be careful!" He rises from his frog-like posture at the

grating, and walks the landing in agitation. "Just hold on a minute!"

Miller: "Oh, *we* sha' n't stir."

Roberts: "I'll see what can be done."

Miller: "Well, see quick, please. We have plenty of time, but we don't want to lose any. Don't alarm Mrs. Miller, if you can help it."

Roberts: "No, no."

Mrs. Curwen: "You *may* alarm Mr. Curwen."

Roberts: "What! Are *you* there?"

Mrs. Curwen: "Here? I 've been here all my life!"

Roberts: "Ha! ha! ha! That 's right. We 'll soon have you out. Keep up your spirits."

Mrs. Curwen: "But I 'm *not* keeping them up."

Miss Lawton: "Tell papa I'm here too."

Roberts: "What! You too, Miss Lawton?"

Mrs. Crashaw: "Yes, and young Mr. Bemis. Did n't I *tell* you we were all here?"

Roberts: "I could n't realize it. Well, wait a moment."

Mrs. Curwen: "Oh, you can trust us to wait."

Roberts, returning with Dr. Lawton and Mr. Bemis, who join him in stooping around the grated door of the shaft: "They 're just under here in the well of the elevator, midway between the two stories."

Lawton: "Ha! ha! ha! You don't say so."

Bemis: "Bless my heart! What are they doing there?"

Miller: "We're not doing anything."

Mrs. Curwen: "We're waiting for you to do something."

Miss Lawton: "Oh, papa!"

Lawton: "Don't be troubled, Lou, we'll soon have you out."

Young Mr. Bemis: "Don't be alarmed, sir. Miss Lawton is all right."

Miss Lawton: "Yes, I'm not frightened, papa."

Lawton: "Well, that's a great thing in cases of this kind. How did you happen to get there?"

Miller, indignantly: "How do you suppose? We came up in the elevator."

Lawton: "Well, why didn't you come the rest of the way?"

Miller: "The elevator would n't."

Lawton: "What seems to be the matter?"

Miller: "We don't know."

Lawton: "Have you tried to start it?"

Miller: "Well, I'll leave that to your imagination."

Lawton: "Well, be careful what you do. You might —"

Miller, interrupting: "Roberts, who 's that talking?"

Roberts, coming forward politely: "Oh, excuse me! I forgot that you did n't know each other. Dr. Lawton, Mr. Miller." Introducing them.

Lawton: "Glad to know you."

Miller: "Very happy to make your acquaintance, and hope some day to see

you. And now, if you have completed your diagnosis — "

Mrs. Curwen: "None of us have ever had it before, doctor; nor any of our families, so far as we know."

Lawton: "Ha! ha! ha! Very good! Well, just keep quiet. We 'll have you all out of there presently."

Bemis: "Yes, remain perfectly still."

Roberts: "Yes, we 'll have you out. Just wait."

Miller: "You seem to think we 're going to run away. Why should n't we keep quiet? Do you suppose we 're going to be very boisterous, shut up here like rats in a trap?"

Mrs. Curwen: "Or birds in a cage, if you want a more pleasing image."

Mrs. Crashaw: "How are you going to get us out, Edward?"

Roberts: "We don't know yet. But keep quiet—"

Miller: "Keep quiet! Great heavens! we're afraid to stir a finger. Now don't say 'keep quiet' any more, for we can't stand it."

Lawton: "He's in open rebellion. What are you going to do, Roberts?"

Roberts, rising and scratching his head: "Well, I don't know yet. We might break a hole in the roof."

Lawton: "Ah, I don't think that would do. Besides you'd have to get a carpenter."

Roberts: "That's true. And it would make a racket, and alarm the house—" staring desperately at the grated doorway of the shaft. "If I could only find an elevator man—an elevator builder!

But of course they all live in the suburbs, and they 're keeping Christmas, and it would take too long, anyway."

Bemis: "Had n't you better send for the police? It seems to me it 's a case for the authorities."

Lawton: "Ah, there speaks the Europeanized mind! They always leave the initiative to the authorities. Go out and sound the fire-alarm, Roberts. It 's a case for the Fire Department."

Roberts: "Oh, it 's all very well to joke, Dr. Lawton. Why don't you prescribe something?"

Lawton: "Surgical treatment seems to be indicated, and I 'm merely a general practitioner."

Roberts: "If Willis were only here, he 'd find some way out of it. Well, I 'll have to go for help somewhere —"

Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Miller, bursting upon the scene: "Oh, what is it?"

Lawton: "Ah, you need n't go for help, my dear fellow. It 's come!"

Mrs. Roberts: "What are you all doing here, Edward?"

Mrs. Miller: "Oh, have you had any bad news of Mr. Miller?"

Mrs. Roberts: "Or Aunt Mary?"

Miller, calling up: "Well, are you going to keep us here all night? Why don't you do something?"

Mrs. Miller: "Oh, what 's that? Oh, it 's Mr. Miller! Oh, where are you, Ellery?"

Miller: "In the elevator."

Mrs. Miller: "Oh! and where is the elevator? Why don't you get out? Oh —"

Miller: "It 's caught, and we can't."

Mrs. Miller: "Caught? Oh, then you will be killed — killed — killed! And it 's all my fault, sending you back after my fan, and I had it all the time in my own pocket; and it comes from my habit of giving it to you to carry in your overcoat pocket, because it 's deep, and the fan can't break. And of course I never thought of my own pocket, and I never *should* have thought of it at all if Mr. Curwen had n't been going back to get Mrs. Curwen's glove, for he 'd brought another right after she 'd sent him for a left, and we were all having such a laugh about it, and I just happened to put my hand on my pocket, and there I felt the fan. And oh, *what* shall I do?" Mrs. Miller utters these

explanations and self-reproaches in a lamentable voice, while crouching close to the grated door to the elevator shaft, and clinging to its meshes.

Miller: "Well, well, it's all right. I've got you another fan, here. Don't be frightened."

Mrs. Roberts, wildly: "Where's Aunt Mary, Edward? Has Willis got back?" At a guilty look from her husband: "Edward! *don't* tell me that *she's* in that elevator! Don't do it, Edward! For your own sake don't. Don't tell me that your own child's mother's aunt is down there, suspended between heaven and earth like — like—"

Lawton: "The coffin of the Prophet."

Mrs. Roberts: "Yes. *Don't* tell me, Edward! Spare your child's mother, if you won't spare your wife!"

Mrs. Crashaw: "Agnes! don't be ridiculous. I'm here, and I never was more comfortable in my life."

Mrs. Roberts, calling down the grating: "Oh! Is it you, Aunt Mary?"

Mrs. Crashaw: "Of course it is!"

Mrs. Roberts: "You recognize my voice?"

Mrs. Crashaw: "I should hope so, indeed! Why should n't I?"

Mrs. Roberts: "And you know me? Agnes? Oh!"

Mrs. Crashaw: "Don't be a goose, Agnes."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, it *is* you, aunty. It *is!* Oh, I'm *so* glad! I'm *so* happy! But keep perfectly still, aunty dear, and we'll soon have you out. Think of baby, and don't give way."

Mrs. Crashaw: "I shall not, if the elevator does n't, you may depend upon that."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, what courage you *do* have! But keep up your spirits! Mrs. Miller and I have just come from seeing baby. She 's gone to sleep with all her little presents in her arms. The children did want to see you so much before they went to bed. But never mind that now, Aunt Mary. I 'm only too thankful to have you at all!"

Mrs. Crashaw: "I wish you did have me! And if you will all stop talking and try some of you to do something, I shall be greatly obliged to you. It 's worse than it was in the sleeping-car that night."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, do you remember

it, Aunt Mary? Oh, how funny you are!" Turning heroically to her husband: "Now, Edward, dear, get them out. If it's necessary, get them out over my dead body. Anything! Only hurry. I will be calm; I will be patient. But you must act instantly. Oh, here comes Mr. Curwen!" Mr. Curwen mounts the stairs to the landing with every sign of exhaustion, as if he had made a very quick run to and from his house. "Oh, *he* will help — I know he will! Oh, Mr. Curwen, the elevator is caught just below here with my aunt in it and Mrs. Miller's husband —"

Lawton: "And my girl."

Bemis: "And my boy."

Mrs. Curwen, calling up: "And your wife!"

Curwen, horror-struck: "And my wife! Oh, heavenly powers! what are we going to do? How shall we get them out? Why don't they come up?"

All: "They can't."

Curwen: "Can't? Oh, my goodness!" He flies at the grating, and kicks and beats it.

Roberts: "Hold on! What's the use of that?"

Lawton: "You could n't get at them if you beat the door down."

Bemis: "Certainly not." They lay hands upon him and restrain him.

Curwen, struggling: "Let me speak to my wife! Will you prevent a husband from speaking to his own wife?"

Mrs. Miller, in blind admiration of his

frenzy: "Yes, that's just what I said. If some one had beaten the door in at once —"

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, Edward, dear, let him speak to his wife." Tearfully: "Think if *I* were there!"

Roberts, releasing him: "He may speak to his wife all night. But he must n't knock the house down."

Curwen, rushing at the grating: "Caroline! Can you hear me? Are you safe?"

Mrs. Curwen: "Perfectly. I had a little faint when we first stuck —"

Curwen: "Faint? Oh!"

Mrs. Curwen: "But I am all right now."

Curwen: "Well, that's right. Don't be frightened! There's no occasion for

excitement. Keep perfectly calm and collected. It 's the only way — What 's that ringing?" The sound of an electric bell is heard within the elevator. It increases in fury.

Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Miller: "Oh, is n't it dreadful?"

The Elevator Boy: "It 's somebody on the ground-floor callin' the elevator!"

Curwen: "Well, never mind him. Don't pay the slightest attention to him. Let him go to the deuce! And, Caroline!"

Mrs. Curwen: "Yes?"

Curwen: "I — I — I 've got your glove all right."

Mrs. Curwen: "Left, you mean, I hope?"

Curwen: "Yes, left, dearest! I *mean* left."

Mrs. Curwen: "Eight-button?"

Curwen: "Yes."

Mrs. Curwen: "Light drab?"

Curwen, pulling a light yellow glove from his pocket: "Oh!" He staggers away from the grating and stays himself against the wall, the mistaken glove dangling limply from his hand.

Roberts, Lawton, and Bemis: "Ah! ha! ha! ha!"

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, for shame! to laugh at such a time!"

Mrs. Miller: "When it's a question of life and death. There! the ringing's stopped. What's that?" Steps are heard mounting the stairway rapidly, several treads at a time. Mr. Campbell

suddenly bursts into the group on the landing with a final bound from the stairway. "Oh!"

Campbell: "I can't find Aunt Mary, Agnes. I can't find anything — not even the elevator. Where's the elevator? I rang for it down there till I was black in the face."

Mrs. Roberts: "No wonder! It's here."

Mrs. Miller: "Between this floor and the floor below. With my husband in it."

Curwen: "And my wife!"

Lawton: "And my daughter!"

Bemis: "And my son!"

Mrs. Roberts: "And aunty!"

All: "And it's stuck fast."

Roberts: "And the long and short of

it is, Willis, that we don't know how to get them out, and we wish you would suggest some way."

Lawton: "There 's been a great tacit confidence among us in your executive ability and your inventive genius."

Mrs. Roberts: "Oh, yes, we know you can do it."

Mrs. Miller: "If you can't, nothing can save them."

Campbell, going to the grating: "Miller!"

Miller: "Well?"

Campbell: "Start her up!"

Miller: "Now, look here, Campbell, we are not going to stand that; we 've had enough of it. I speak for the whole elevator. Don't you suppose that if it had been possible to start her up we—"

Mrs. Curwen: "We should n't have been at the moon by this time."

Campbell: "Well, then, start her *down!*"

Miller: "I never thought of that." To the Elevator Boy: "Start her down." To the people on the landing above: "Hurrah! She 's off!"

Campbell: "Well, *now* start her up!"

A joint cry from the elevator: "Thank you! we 'll *walk* up this time."

Miller: "Here! let us out at this landing!" They are heard precipitately emerging, with sighs and groans of relief, on the floor below.

Mrs. Roberts, devoutly: "O Willis, it seems like an interposition of Providence, your coming just at this moment."

Campbell: "Interposition of common

sense! These hydraulic elevators weaken sometimes, and can't go any further."

Roberts, to the shipwrecked guests, who arrive at the top of the stairs, crestfallen, spent, and clinging to one another for support: "Why did n't you think of starting her down, some of you?"

Mrs. Roberts, welcoming them with kisses and hand-shakes: "I should have thought it would occur to you at once."

Miller, goaded to exasperation: "Did it occur to any of *you?*"

Lawton, with sublime impudence: "It occurred to *all* of us. But we naturally supposed you had tried it."

Mrs. Miller, taking possession of her husband: "Oh, what a fright you have given us!"

Miller: "*I* given you! Do you sup-

pose I did it out of a joke, or voluntarily?"

Mrs. Roberts: "Aunty, I don't know what to say to you. *You* ought to have been here long ago, before anything happened."

Mrs. Crashaw: "Oh, I can explain everything in due season. What I wish you to do now is to let me get at Willis, and kiss him." As Campbell submits to her embrace: "You dear, good fellow! If it had n't been for your presence of mind, I don't know how we should ever have got out of that horrid pen."

Mrs. Curwen, giving him her hand: "As it is n't proper for *me* to kiss you —"

Campbell: "Well, I don't know. I don't wish to be *too* modest."

Mrs. Curwen: "I think I shall have to vote you a service of plate."

Mrs. Roberts: "Come and look at the pattern of mine. And, Willis, as you are the true hero of the occasion, you shall take me in to dinner. And I am not going to let anybody go before you." She seizes his arm, and leads the way from the landing into the apartment. Roberts, Lawton and Bemis follow stragglingly.

Mrs. Miller, getting her husband to one side: "When she fainted, she fainted *at* you, of course! What did you do?"

Miller: "Who? I? Oh!" After a moment's reflection: "She came to!"

Curwen, getting his wife aside: "When you fainted, Caroline, who revived you?"

Mrs. Curwen: "Who? *Me?* Oh! How should I know? I was insensible." They wheel arm in arm, and meet Mr. and Mrs. Miller in the middle. Mrs. Curwen yields precedence with an ironical courtesy: "After you, Mrs. Miller!"

Mrs. Miller, in a nervous, inimical twitter: "Oh, before the heroine of the lost elevator?"

Mrs. Curwen, dropping her husband's arm, and taking Mrs. Miller's: "Let us split the difference."

Mrs. Miller: "Delightful! I shall never forget the honor."

Mrs. Curwen: "Oh, don't speak of honors! Mr. Miller was *so* kind through all those terrible scenes in the elevator"

Mrs. Miller: "I've no doubt you showed yourself duly faithful." They pass in, followed by their husbands.

Young Mr. Bemis, timidly: "Miss Lawton, in the elevator you asked me not to leave you. Did you — ah — mean — I *must* ask you; it may be my only chance; if you meant — never?"

Miss Lawton, dropping her head: "I — I — don't — know."

Young Mr. Bemis: "But if I *wished* never to leave you, should you send me away?"

Miss Lawton, with a shy, sly upward glance at him, "Not in the elevator!"

Young Mr. Bemis: "Oh!"

Mrs. Roberts, re-appearing at the door: "Why, you good-for-nothing young things, why don't you come to — Oh!

excuse me!" She re-enters precipitately, followed by her tardy guests, on whom she casts a backward glance of sympathy. "Oh, you *need n't* hurry!"

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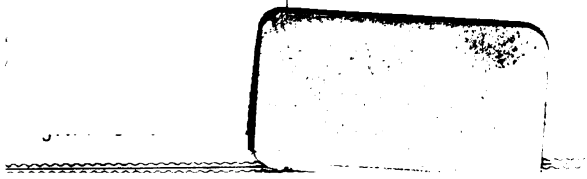
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